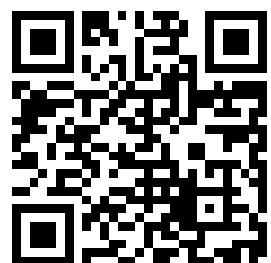

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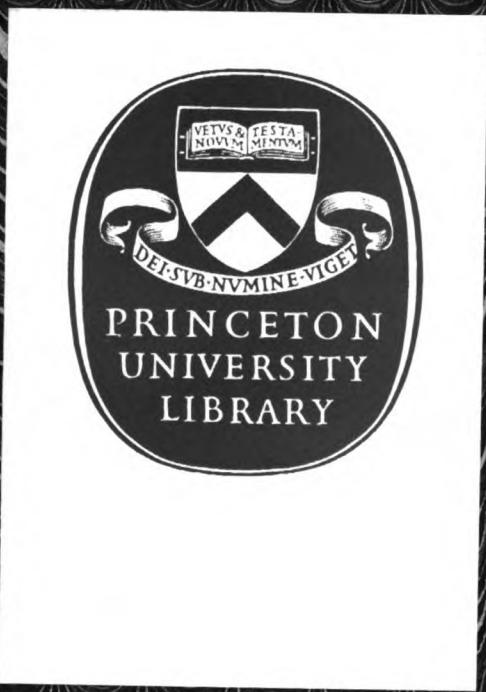
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Ernest A. Floryer

13 Aug. 87.

The Sulphur Mines of Ras-el-Ginse
etc.

[Handwritten text in French and English]
The following is a translation of a portion of a letter
written by Ernest A. Floryer, dated Aug. 13, 1887.
[Handwritten signature]

(RCPPA)
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The Sulphur Mines of Ras-el-Gimse, and the
Lawsuit of the "Société Soufrière" of Egypt.

Written at 72
S. A.

Ten years ago the Khedive Ismael Pasha still sat on the
Viceregal throne at Cairo; his antechambers were besieged by
those who sought his favour; members of the "foreigners'
colonies" crowded to the gorgeous feasts which he gave in his
palace or which were given at his expense by the ministers
or the heir; his exertions for ensuring safety in the coun-
try, for beautifying the capital, for improving public health
through the establishment of ice-factories, aqueducts and
hospitals, his zeal for a higher education, his generosi-
ty towards the charitable institutions and churches of all
nations and towards the enterprises of various foreigners
settled in the country, his care for the discovery and pre-
servation of the splendid remains of antiquity and his ef-
forts for the increase of roads and the improvement of har-
bours, as well as for the suppression of the slave trade in
the regions of the Upper Nile, - all these qualities were re-
nowned throughout Europe, and some of the first scientific
societies of European capitals numbered the Khedive amongst
their Hon. members, in order to show their gratitude for the
help he had given to explorers.

And a few years later? All this appeared to be for-

gotten. Only the most extravagant contempt was poured upon the "spendthrift." The Sultan, himself far less capable of a sound financial system, was urged by the European powers to banish his vassal from throne and country. But this howl of indignation was mainly "got up" artificially, and, though echoed by the voices of the peaceful and unconcerned, soon exposed its originators to the danger of being charged with immoral concern in the mismanagement of the despot, or at least with self-interested motives.

This period of persecution has now also passed away.⁽¹⁾ The chorus of horror raised by the really or presumably injured speculators has quieted down, for years the prince has been repenting of his really great failure in banishment, so that the moment now appears to have arrived for an impartial judgment of the circumstances which surrounded Ismael's rule in Egypt, and which have brought about the financial ruin of the country. So distinguished an authority as Prof. G. Ebers has already brought back to our memory the magnificent services of the late Khedive, services which demand our recognition all the more when we consider that we are dealing with the oriental ruler of an African country. We will therefore not deal with them here. Neither will we examine into the

(1) As also the worship of the new Khedive, which to anyone acquainted with the person and circumstances can only have appeared ridiculous.

truth and weight of the innumerable accusations which have been made against him; rather let it be our task to throw light on the conduct of the accusers and to ascertain their share in the blame which has been heaped upon the shoulders of the Khedive alone.

Whosoever has, like the present writer, lived for years in the house of one of the foreign consuls general in Egypt and has thus gained some knowledge of the commercial transactions of the foreigners living there, must have been oppressed by the painful conviction that no small part of the foreigners who compose the so-called colonies and are thus under the jurisdiction of their consul, misuse their time in Egypt to a disgraceful extent, their only object being to grow rich in the shortest possible time by some means or other, and then, with the money pillaged from the country, to go home and cut a great figure in some large city as a capitalist or some other money-sounding title. Such "parvenus" of doubtful merit claim and receive - unfortunately for the most part in Europe, an amount of consideration which, on the scene of their commercial activity, would in all probability have been withheld publicly, and most certainly would have been refused privately amongst the inhabitants themselves.

During the American war, the flourishing and extraordinary remunerative cotton trade had given Egypt the reputa-

tion of an Eldorado amongst European money-seekers, and attracted crowds of adventurers. When the price of cotton then rapidly fell and the whole business capacities of the country deteriorated, it appeared to those who hoped to rise rapidly and easily a cruel disappointment, that even in Egypt success should come only by serious and solid work; and so the greater number of them lent themselves to swindling speculations such as existed largely in Egypt, before the beginning of our period to an extent which middle Europe has never seen, even in the time of our worst commercial affairs. It is true that the leniency of the Khedive, who not only did not oppose but even supported these overbold enterprises, may have brought about such a state of things; but even so, the chief blame rests not with the Viceroy, already sufficiently punished for his compliance, but with the European speculators.

For months these adventurers urged their consuls to procure for them an audience with the ruler and to intercede with him on their behalf - and woe to that consul who, convinced of the futility of the insane plans, refused too long to yield to such pressure! Both in Egypt and at home he was despised and abused for not having "protected" those committed to his care sufficiently, not so zealously perhaps as other, unfortunately not always quite disinterested, representatives

of European states had done. In no other country outside Europe were the services of honest representatives of foreign governments claimed from them in so unpleasant and thankless a manner as during this time in Egypt. If the Consulgeneral refused his assistance finally, the speculator probably followed the other promising road, he secured for himself, by correspondingly high promises or still better by payment down (the customary bakschisch) the help of some high vice-regal official, and hung about the antechambers of the Khedive's audience chamber with patient pertinacity, until he attracted the attention of the Khedive himself, or was brought into notices by the allies; and then, in order to get rid of him he was granted an audience and often gained his object. This object however was always to secure a "Commission" or "Concession."

By a commission was understood the right of contracting to supply to the government any large quantity of goods which were needed by it, or at least which were declared as necessary by the petitioner. This need certainly did not exist in all cases, and the commission was then silently considered and treated by both sides as an act of gracious State protection. The Commission was then as a rule immediately sold and rebought at the Exchange at Alexandria, and finally undertaken by a third or fourth party, the largest possible gain being always kept in view. The vice-regal officials natur-

ally in the course of these transactions secured their own share of profits too, either by conveniently forgetting their power of control, or by using it in the most friendly sense, the Khedive having meanwhile really forgotten the whole business (in itself unnecessary) or studiously ignored the manner of proceeding. In this way it is said that instead of new saddles for the Egyptian cavalry, old ones were bought up in Europe and refurnished; and instead of good butter, stuff for greasing soldiers' boots was procured. Such were the valuable goods stored away in the Cairo Magazine where they either quietly remained, or whence they after a time mysteriously disappeared.

The second form of favour for which the Khedive was incessantly besieged by members of the "foreigners' colonies" was that of Concessions or Monopolies, which were of far greater importance to the benefactor than commissions, because they were invariably connected with the fatal system of "Reclamation." Monopolies to all appearance worthless were frequently asked for by men whose secret purpose was to make a business entirely by reclamation. A case of this sort was generally managed so that the Ruler granted to the concessionists, at their own request, all possible advantages such as rent free land, exemption from taxes and duties on building materials, the sale of products at high prices, etc;

and if the profit was even then not sufficient, he was rewarded by this highly favoured being with a demand for compensation - one of those infamous Reclamations which the consulate of the State concerned could obtain on the slightest possible pretext. These Reclamations against the government were of such general prevalence and formed so vital a part of European speculation in Egypt that they became the subject of general conversation, and the daily torment of the consuls, who also in this respect found themselves the subjects of the wildest imputations and the most excited criticism. Thus the money demanded by the claimants from the government amounted to an enormous sum, so that, when the affair came to be settled, it was a regular thing that only a small part of the money claimed was paid.

An interesting and not very well-known instance of how far such thankless reclamation and unscrupulous exactions were carried on, especially by members of the French Colony in Egypt, occurs in the history of the Suez Canal.⁽¹⁾

The "Universal Company of the Maritime Canal at Suez" had been supported by the Viceroy in the most generous fashion; nevertheless it misused to a boundless extent one of the privileges granted - namely the entrance of all neces-

(1) My statements are throughout based upon the communication made to me on the spot, as well as at Cairo and Alexandria by consular officials, and upon the papers of the German Consul General at Alexandria.

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sary building materials for the canal free of duty; so that for instance all articles necessary for the most refined comforts of life, which in Egypt are subject to very high import duties, came tax free to Ismailia, and, as no taxes existed there, were thence smuggled into Cairo. When the government then stepped in and threatened to withdraw the favour of free import, the Company raised the usual cry of righteous indignation. It remembered however, especially when the government showed itself in earnest, a better way, and tried in the most ingenious manner to make profit out of the threatening danger, for the canal was then (spring of 1869) by no means completed, and the funds were exhausted. So the President Director of the Company offered to return the right of free import to the Viceroy, as well as a number of other benefits conferred on the company, for the sum of 30 million francs. The bugbear with which the French were accustomed to threaten, had however by that time lost its former terrors, and besides, the representatives of the other powers repeatedly urged the Khedive not to let himself be plundered in so cold-blooded a manner, and in the end Ismael Pasha refused the proposals. A few days later, however, the Consuls were astonished by the news that the Khedive had nevertheless pledged himself to pay the 30 million francs. - The European dignitaries, amazed and angry, took him to task

Ismael however shewed them that he, as a cunning and business like Oriental, had outwitted his oppressors, for Article 10 of the agreement enacted that the payment of the sum in question should be made entirely in the coupons of the 176,602 shares of the Canal Company, which the Egyptian government at that time possessed. These shares were due on Jan. 1. 1870, and were guaranteed by the company at 10 per cent. In other words the Khedive received back again all that he had conceded, and paid nothing in return: for no one had then the slightest doubt that, far from there being any divident on the shares by Jan. 1. '87, there could not be any for a considerable number of years. Ismael was therefore right when he smilingly remarked to the astonished Consul general: "My coupons will after all have some value and some use." (1)

The details of another affair of the same kind may here be inserted, as I had the opportunity not only of knowing the principal personages in the tragic-comedy, but also - as far as this is possible in Oriental surroundings - of examining their transactions, which I can only designate as sheer pilage. I give the story in very much the same words that I wrote ten years ago when the whole circumstances were fresh in my memory.

(1) For the finances of the Canal Company at this time, cf. Stephan's "Egypt of Today" (Das heutige Aegypten) in which work however the above occurrence does not appear.

In the course of the summer of 1870, the European newspapers contained the news that an Egyptian Sulphurmine Company claimed 19 million francs compensation from the Viceroy Ismael, and were preparing a lawsuit. Most Europeans who had scarcely heard of the existence of Egyptian sulphur, much less of a mine being worked, soon forgot this intelligence. But in Egypt, where people live quickly and abound in scandal this story occupied the minds of Europeans in the most lively manner, - a circumstance which afforded to one familiar with the conditions of the country another proof of the questionable manner in which the greater number of Europeans in the East endeavour to fulfil their mission of civilisation. May it be permitted to the present writer to bring about by the publication of the following circumstances that a part of the European colony of the country should not lower the reputation of Europeans in the eyes of the natives through unsound as well as deliberately dishonest speculations.

On that part of the Egyptian Red Sea Coast which lies between Lat. 28 and 30 N. there are several places where the last landslip consists of sulphurous gypsum. The best known of these regions are Ras-el-Gimse, at the entrance of the Bay of Suez, and Ranga by Ras Benas near the old harbour of Berenice. There are numerous other spots where sulphur is found in small quantities; south of the tropics by Ras

Ranai)

Ranai, and on the Island of Makaur there are, according to Schweinfurth, coast hills, sometimes rising as high as 500ft which exhibit exactly the same formation as the sulphur hills of the more northern coast, and therefore justify the supposition that they too consist of sulphurous gypsum. The remarkable fact that the sulphurous strata as well as those containing petroleum are all found on the sea coast, led the celebrated Prof. Fraas of Stuttgart (who has published in his excellent work "From the East" (Aus dem Orient) an account of his journey in Palestine and Egypt undertaken between 1860-70) to the conclusion that the presence of sulphur as of bitumen in these coast hills formed apparently out of ancient coral reefs, is only to be ascribed to the long and continuous decomposition of those organic bodies in which the Red Sea abounds. On the other hand, Russegger maintained that the + appearance of sulphur on "Gebel Kebrit" was due to volcanic agencies in the lime stone of the lower chalk ridge - It is beyond the province of these pages to dwell any longer on this difficult question which I have already tried elsewhere to solve. (1) I will only repeat here that, as Bitumen is also found in the interior of Egypt near Bir-el-Fachmeh, so I have pointed out beautiful native sulphur in detached mass-

(1) "On the Presence of Asphalt and Sulphur in the Basin of the Red Sea." Gaea, 1872.I.III.V.

es amongst the gypseous chalk of Turra in the Nile valley. Thus the appearance of both minerals in Egypt is not confined to the immediate neighbourhood of the sea, although certainly it is only there that they have hitherto been found in large quantities. (1) In the region of Ras Benas, it appears from portions, some of which I possess and some of which I was able to examine in the Marquis of Bassano's collection, that the sulphur is all in very small grains, almost powder, amongst which a quantity of very soft white gypsum is mingled

Far more varied and to the mineralogist more attractive does it appear in Ras-el-Gimse, situated half a day's journey south of the well-known Gebel Zeit (Oil Mountain) called by the natives Gebel Keprit (Sulphur Mountain) almost in the same latitude as Ras Mohammed the southern point of the Sinai peninsula. Opposite the little Gobal and Scheduan Islands lying near the coast, the small peninsula Ras-el-Gimse runs out into the sea, being, according to the Marquis of Bassano's report, only joined to the main land by a narrow flat strip of sand. On its main surface however it is covered with steep masses of rock varying in height from 2 to 70 meters⁽²⁾

(1) Von Kloeden's statement in his handbook of Geology, that Sulphur is found near Kenne, must be an error.

(2) According to Schwinfurth 200ft, according to Fraas "at most 25 meters."

which are separated by a deep channel running from east to west; in this channel is the narrow sandy isthmus. The extent of Ras-el-Gimse is about 2 kilometres. The coast is difficult to reach: only on the S.E. shore is there a little narrow bay formed by projecting coral reefs, on which rests a sandbank, dry at low tide, making an excellent harbour, sheltered on all sides, with a sandy anchorage, so that ships with a draught of from 15 to 20 feet can approach close to the coast. The shore consists of a narrow coast plain rising towards the foot of the hills, covered with a fine powdery smooth, dazzlingly white gypsum dust, in which one sinks up to the knees. From this coast rise steep and sheer, barren rocky walls, inaccessible except by occasional projecting strata or hewn steps, and in that clear atmosphere most painful to the eyes, by reason of the dazzling reflection of the sun's glaring rays from the barren white rocks.

The undermost layer of these rocks consists of snowwhite salt gypsum; in the second or middle layer is found the largest quantity of native sulphur, and lastly, the uppermost strata, which are of a soft and exceedingly fine formation, contain only occasional weak sulphur veins and numerous clefts covered with a thin crystallised sulphurous deposit; yet it is here that the largest single sulphur crystals are found. Large veins and detached masses of fibrous gypsum and gyp-

✓ 11.000 m. m. 1000 m. m. 1000 m. m.
Kanqas. 11.000 m. m. 1000 m. m. 1000 m. m.

seous spar, sometimes strongly salted and penetrated with powdery sulphur, are to be found in all the layers of the chalky crypto-crystal gypsum masses. In the middle notch - the only one worth working - according to the Marquis of Bassano's report, and a sketch made by him, lie two considerable veins of sulphurous stone, both of which sink from south to north in such a way that the veins of the northern "old or black" mountain appear to be continuations of the veins of the southern "new" mountain.

The appearance of the sulphur is, according to Bassano's collection very varied; sometimes it is found as sulphur powder closely united with earthy gypsum or strewn amongst the clefts and fissures of the fibrous and sparry gypsum; sometimes it forms a thin coating or close crystallised masses, which, in "opens" or cavities are frequently set with innumerable ~~hemitrope~~ of the minutest crystals; and sometimes single crystals appear in the crevices or cavities of sulphurous gypsums. The form of the crystals is mostly laminar at times they exhibit a surface of some extent and correspond in the main with those forms observed by Bianconi on the coast of Sicily, but they also frequently appear as hemitrope crystals.

There is one peculiar form found very rarely at Gimse, and as far as I know, nowhere else, namely close yellowish-

grey or yellowish brown detached masses, sometimes with light coloured edges, in general appearance not unlike a half-opal, especially when, as is sometimes the case, the upper surface is rounded off; this surface however is generally covered with light yellow sulphur crystals. This dark mass never appears self-crystallised, but it is found here and there in cavities, in drop-form as though liquid. If lighted at the corners it burns with a pale flame, and gradually gives off a distinctly bitumenous smell. The supposition that we were dealing with sulphur impregnated with bitumen was confirmed by chemical analysis, but Herr v. Naschold at that time assistant in the chemical Laboratory of the Dresden Polytechnic could only show one per cent of what he considered bitumen in the component parts indissoluble in sulphuret of carbon; at the same time he observed in the dissolved sulphur a peculiar glittering appearance which he took for solid carbono-hydrous substances. We need not be surprised at this mixture of bitumenous substances for not only in the neighbouring "Oil Mountain" but also in Ras-el-Gimse itself, on the north side of the Black Mountain is found petroleum which, in a span broad, semi-liquid, iridescent layer of yellowish brown colour collects on the water, which fills artificially hollowed cavities on a level with the sea. Schweinfurth hoped great things from borings made in the rock, but neither here nor

at Gebel Zeit have these attempts been rewarded by greater productiveness of the oilsprings.

I noticed on some comparatively large specimens of sulphur crystals gypsum crystals partly single and needle or blade shaped, and partly hemitropic. Related with these is certainly a specimen which Schweinfurth sent to Berlin and which he describes as "single white crystals on sulphurous gypsum." Dr Arzruni has been so kind as to have the specimens in the Berlin Museum examined and has reported to me that these "white crystals" too are fixed in sulphur and are to be regarded as gypsum crystals, although transformed. What the substance is of which these opaque, porcelain-like, white pseudomorphous minerals consist has as yet to be determined.

Finally, I may mention here an accessory mineral specimen from Ras el Gimse which I have as yet only seen in samples; it consists of a finely powdered bright red mass, which fills the small cavities of a piece of drusy gypsum in my possession, and may probably be attributed to a mixture of sulphur with quicksilver or "arsen". (arsenic?)

In the days of Roman rule, those coast regions were not without life; some towns with flourishing traffic rose on the coast, and later on there were rich monasteries a few miles inland, while, in the mountains parallel with the coast were considerable settlements of workmen who came there to

+
the Lightening
Box

get the so-called oriental granite of Gebel Charib and Gebel Fatire, as well as the highly prized red porphyry of Gebel Ducan. These were detached in immense blocks, dressed on the spot and sent off to the Nile or the seaport Myos Hormos, whence they were shipped to Klysma (Suez) and then through the freshwater canal to Alexandria, and finally to splendour-loving Rome, or later to Constantinople. Under the Arabs these blocks lay untouched, the canal became choked up and the towns fell into decay; only the sulphur beds of Ras-el-Gimse were occasionally worked under the Khalif. So that this part of the eastern Egyptian coast now lies a dreary waste; the valleys of the bare mountains, but scantily provided with vegetation on account of the insufficient winter rains and sea-dew, are inhabited only by a few scattered Bedouin tribes who now and then approach the coast to get sulphur or to plunder the neighbouring islands of their turtle eggs. After 1860 however, a new activity sprang upon the peninsula of Ras-el-Gimse, and hundreds of workmen crowded to the sulphur beds. Yet in a few years this mine was forsaken, the houses and furnaces fell into ruins and lie buried in gypsum dust, and the stillness of a desert now reigns in this part of the coast.

Let us now describe the events which occurred there according to the verbal and documentary evidence of eye witnesses, as

well as the written defence of the German official who was mixed up in that fatal lawsuit.

In the year 1863 at Ramle near Alexandria, the Marquis of Bassano, son of the wellknown private secretary of Napoleon I and brother of the Duke of Bassano then living in France, received from the Khedive in answer to his petition, the sole right of working the sulphur on the North part of the Egyptian coast for a period of thirty years. In the following year he carried on experimental works for seven months without however meeting with much success. Then it happened that a quarrel arose with the Bedouin tribes in the neighbouring valleys; blows were struck, an open fight ensued and one man was killed. The Marquis at once seized this fortunate opportunity of making the government responsible for the insecurity of the district granted to him. He hoped thus to make a considerable profit out of this uncomfortable affair and spoke of a compensation of several million francs, which he intended by a lawsuit to force the government to pay. Ismael Pasha refused these demands, but consented, under pressure of the French consul general Outrey, and in consequence of a direct request of Napoleon III in a despatch dated Oct. 18th 1865, to prolong the Monopoly for seven years, pledged himself to buy at a very favourable price all the sulphur procured by the Marquis during those seven years, endeavoured to ensure the safety of the works by placing at his own expense

a body of 25 men on the peninsula, and granted special and far reaching facilities with regard to engaging Fellahs from Upper Egypt as miners.

We may conclude with certainty that the desire to conciliate the French government was not the Khedive's only motive in granting such large concessions, but that he hoped also to gain on his own territory a well-worked and productive sulphur mine; for the Egyptian government in the event of their becoming free from Turkish rule, might possibly have need of a large quantity of the powder. Nevertheless, the Khedive, made cautious by the ill-success of the first opening of the mine, endeavoured to dissuade the Marquis from his other plan, and he^{is} said to have offered him profitable Commissions or concessions. Bassano however insisted on the rights already granted, and sent for the mining engineer Petitgand from Paris, who examined the sulphur beds and estimated their net profit at about 600,000 francs a year.

Based upon this verdict, a little company was formed, consisting of Bassano, the banker H. Oppenheim the richest man in Egypt, and an influential Alexandrian Frenchman F. Bravay, the last of whom ceded to the company the profits of the Ranga sulphur mine, which he had bought from the former concessionist Grech Borg for 100,000 francs, refusing however to contribute any further ready money, as he had already lost by

Planets & the visible or
brightest stars of the N. &
Polaris with the
brightest stars in the
front - the moon & sun &
brightest stars of the year
in the sky

the above enterprise a sum of 350,000 francs. Besides these some few shareholders were found in Europe, and then in 1866 the company was instituted by the House of Oppenheim in Paris with a capital of a million francs.

The "Société Soufrière d'Egypte" thus called into life had first to think how to work the Ranga mine, for the concession fell vacant in the Spring of 1867 if the works had not been begun by that date. A little steamer, the ⁽¹⁾ Primo was therefore sent with a trusty French mining engineer, the somewhat adventurous South German Traub and six Italian miners to the Gulf of Berenice. The works were begun in a spot far removed from men or water, were carried on for five months, and the inhospitable shore was then left, with the conviction that the richest mine there could hardly bring in sufficient profit to cover the extraordinary heavy expenses, and that the sulphur beds of Ranga were so poor that all the sulphurous gypsum they had gained would not suffice to kindle the smelting furnaces.

The expedition now settled down on the peninsula of Gimse and began the works: Traub however was stationed as the Company's commissioner at Kenne on the Nile, that he

(1) This was the first steamer that crossed the Isthmus going from Port Said to Ismailia on the Maritime Canal and thence to Suez on the freshwater canal.

might send from there provisions and Egyptian miners along the ancient mountain road. A long residence in Persia and Egypt had familiarised him with the manners and customs of orientals, and rendered him specially suitable for this critical post, the care of which must eventually lead to conflict with the vice-regal officials.

As soon as Traub had settled down at Kenne he endeavoured in the usual eastern fashion to come to a good understanding with the representatives of the viceroy's government; but he found that this did not meet with the approval of his superior, the Marquis of Bassano. The latter required of him even before any difficulties had arisen in Traub's proceedings, three weeks after the negotiations had begun, to keep a stern and careful watch on the supposed artifices of the government which would enable the Company to "put the screw" on the Viceroy. The complaints made against the Company by the first miners taken to Gimse about insufficient food, were attributed by Bassano to secret agitation on the part of the Government, and on this he founded his suspicion of the supposed artifices of the government: whereas, according to Traub's assurance, the cause of the dissension lay solely in the unsatisfactory nature of the contract.

So, even at that date there existed, at least in the mind of the Marquis, the design of using the rights so gener-

7. *Leucanthemum vulgare* L. (Lam.)

ously granted by Ismael Pacha, for the purpose of extracting from him by means of a lawsuit, the largest possible sum of money, - a proceeding which was unfortunately very common amongst the orientalised Europeans, and which was specially supported by the late French government.

In how unscrupulous and wanton a manner the representatives of the Company thought they might treat the Government is shown in an order written by Bassano to Traub and afterwards supported by the engineer Sevin, according to which Traub, through bribing the viceregal officials of the State Saltpetre works at Dendera, should obtain, at the lowest possible price, from 250 to 300 kilogrammes of saltpetre every month to help in the preparation of blasting powder. Traub maintains that he absolutely declined to consider such dishonest proposals, but he apparently did enter into some negotiations, even if we suppose for the sake of his honour, that the sample admittedly sent by him to Gimse was not intended for a sample.

In the meantime the works on the Gypsum rocks of Ras-el-Gimse were actively undertaken in July 1867, the miners having first merely drawn off the petroleum and sent it in earthenware jars to Suez by sailing vessels, which were often hindered by the prevailing North winds. Soon were to be seen at the east foot of the "Old Mountain" on the narrow

dusty strip of shore, a number of wooden or stone huts, which served chiefly as dwellings for the officials and the European miners, and on the summit of Gebel Keprit waved the French tricolor. The supervision of the whole of the works was confined to the renowned Parisian engineer Sevin; a responsible overseer from Sicily built and superintended the furnaces, and the most experienced miners that could be found in Sicily set to work on the rocks, and instructed the Bedouins and fellahs, of whom, in the course of two years, as many as 2000 were sent by the Commissioner from Kenne, and of whom from 300 to 500 were actively engaged in the mines. The number of Europeans varied; in August 1868 there were twenty-six men gathered from the most different nations, who led a joyless life full of hardships and privations. "Bound-ed on the one side by the bitter salt of a lonely sea, and on the other by the dazzling white gypsum rocks, glaring in the sun, exposed to the double power of the reflected sunrays, to the stifling sulphurous vapours and to the odious exhalations of the oil springs, their weal or woe depends entirely on the safe return of the steamer which provides them with meat and drink. (1)

(1) Schweinfurth in a letter.

The European workmen received 3 frs a day wages, besides their food and a bottle of wine, while the natives were provided with drinking water, durracorn (Sirch) and two piasters about 40 pfennigs (4¹/₂). Women were entirely excluded from the colony. Water was brought at first by sailing boats, but afterwards by two small steamers, of which the "Primo" alone remained sea-worthy, and besides the water and sulphur cargoes, did a little trade with Dschidda. The water was pumped from the barrels into a cistern hewn in the rock.

The works were carried on in great winding underground passages or galleries, chiefly from the south side of the Old Mountain. The detached blocks were then carried by a miniature railway to the shore and were there smelted. For this last purpose there were constructed by degrees 40 furnaces, the first of which were hewn out of the gypsum rock, but the twelve last were carefully built after the Sicilian pattern. Of these last however only three were in use. Each furnace measured 100 to 200 cubic metres and resembled a great six-sided lime-kiln with a sloping floor, and in the side a vertical niche or opening through which the smelted sulphur could be let out. In about a month the contents of a furnace were smelted, and thus some 100 to 200 cakes moulded in wooden pans were obtained.

It was owing to the awkward arrangements made by the

company to use to the utmost the already too far reaching rights for the enlistment of workers, as well as to Egyptian circumstances generally that the hiring of further hands led to differences of opinion between the Egyptian officials and the representatives of the Sulphur Company at Kenne.

The company had the right to engage any member of the Bedouin and Fellah population of Upper Egypt from Siut to Assuan who offered himself of his own free will, without examining his papers or enquiring into possibly existing obligations. But for all this immense district they erected only one recruiting office at Kenne, which, although situated in the middle of the district, was not sufficient, as the poor Fellahs living near Assuan or Siut could not risk their fare to Kenne when they might perhaps be turned away. So it came about that the army of miners was entirely drawn from the Mudirie of Kenne. Further, it is known that according to the Egyptian custom, the agricultural population of the country were obliged when required, to give their services to necessary state works, especially the building or repairing of canals, in return for their keep. It was now observed that when such state works were about to be undertaken, Traub's recruiting office was overrun with applicants, whereas, at other times when no such danger threatened, there was often not a single application at the company's office. Who

can wonder that the Sheiks and other officials, deprived of the old fashioned easy conditions attaching to labour, looked with envious and angry eyes on the privileges granted to foreigners, and secretly tried to exercise their old power, thereby occasionally infringing the rights of the Sulphur Company? Still more awkward did the vexed question become when the Fellahs in their wanderings towards the mines tried to escape payment of toll, or an enquiry or fine hanging over them, or when those already hired, took upon themselves in their pride to resist their former masters or the village Sheiks. Certainly these were all cases in which the company should have been most considerate of state rights and the peculiar circumstances of the country. This, indeed, Traub endeavoured to do, as well as repeatedly proposing to the Marquis of Bassano the advisability of some alteration in the mode of hiring labour. But the latter again insisted on the most uncompromising retention of all rights and on an energetic protest in even the least important cases, demanding that in each of these cases a special protocol should be drawn up and signed by the French consular agent in Kenne (1)

(1) This Agent, A Copt named Beschara (if I am not mistaken) was perhaps one of the richest people of Kenne and one of the chief landed proprietors of Upper Egypt. Like his brother the German Consular Agent Besade, however he was very imperfectly educated and knew no language but Arabic. Both these dignitaries lived with their "Harems" in a stone house rather above the ordinary Kenne circumstances, decorated both inside and out with the most elaborate wall paintings executed by a

Further disputes arose through the desertion of the miners in Gimse. According to Traub, these Bedouins, tired of the scarcity of water and the most unexpectedly hard mining labour, fled to some wandering tribes in the neighbouring Wadies of the mountains. But Bassano endeavoured to detect in this too, secret instigations of the Government, in order to gainmaterial for his proposed great lawsuit, and obstinately required that in each single case the prime minister Sherif Pacha should undertake the difficult task of pursuing the culprit and administering corporal punishment for breach of contract, instead of charging him before an Egyptian court and demanding compensation.

In all such cases, according to Traub's assurance, the Government behaved with all possible consideration towards the company and always promised satisfaction. So much so, that when Bassano at last, under the assurance that it was essential for the improvement of the labour question, persuaded Traub to sign a memorandum on the subject of these disputes and in Traub's name hand it over to the Mudir at ----- drunken German artisan. In the two corners of the main entrance were displayed in peaceful splendour the arms of Germany and France - a circumstance that amused us and made us wonder what the brothers would do if war broke out between the two countries. For that this must happen in order to restore the prestige of France was insisted upon as early as 1868 by all the French in Egypt, and by none more vehemently than the Marquis and Marchioness of Bassano.

Kenne, Sherif Pasha sent the Inspector of the Upper Egypt Police prefecture, Abu Sultan Bey to Kenne with the distinct order "to impose a fine on all encroachments of the officials which might hinder the Marquis of Bassano in the exercise of the rights conferred on him." The action of the Muffatisch in accordance with this command led, after a careful examination of the conduct of the Mudir, of the Prefect of Police, and of the Sheiks, to a settlement with which Traub was perfectly satisfied.

In the meantime however, Bassano issued a notice that, in consequence of the difficulties placed by the government in the way of labour-recruiting, the works of Gimse should be instantly stopped, that the miners on the spot should be released on the 15th June (1869) and that Traub should cease to engage any more workmen.

With the help of the telegraph placed at his disposal by the Muffatisch, Traub immediately sent word to the Marquis through the French Consulate that all difficulties which had been mentioned in the Protest had been fully withdrawn, and he asked leave to conclude a fresh agreement satisfactory to all parties. At the same time an elaborate notice of like contents was sent off to the French Consulate for Bassano. But Bassano had not the slightest intention of passing over insignificant differences - although Traub had especially assured him that they really had never caused any substantial

difficulty. He therefore kept Traub waiting nearly three weeks for an answer, until he could be sure that the Muffatitsch tired of waiting had gone away, and he then commanded Traub to come at once to Alexandria in order to give evidence in support of the alleged injuries to the company. Traub's protest against the use of the expostulatory letter, extracted from him for other purposes, in connection with a lawsuit against the government, received no answer; accordingly after winding up affairs in Kenne he set off to Alexandria and there learnt that the Sulphur Company had brought an action against the government for 19 million francs damages, - a sum which implied 32 times the profit originally estimated by Petitgand.

Before following any further the events just related, let us endeavour, by looking back over the course of the works on Gimse, to come to some understanding as to why Bassano pressed his action with such unmistakeable haste.

As early as the beginning of 1869 Sevin had to confess that the working of the mines had taken a bad turn; the number of men had therefore been reduced at once from 500 to 300 and later on to 200. The product fulfilled the promises of the engineer as little as the expectations(?) of the shareholders. (1) Five hundred tons of pure sulphur a month were

(1) Bassano had (seriously or not?) asked the German Consul General in Berlin, with whom he stood Digitized by Google in close social rela-

necessary to cover all working expenses; Herr Sevin had guaranteed at least 250 tons; in reality however only 400 tons in two years had been despatched to the Egyptian government which was pledged to buy. The Marquis would therefore have been in an awkward predicament if his high-sounding offers had been accepted in Berlin. At the same time there was not the slightest prospect of an increase of production: on the contrary, the vaults appeared more and ^{more} exhausted. At the same time the funds were also exhausted; the capital of a million francs had been entirely spent on preparatory works, on the purchase of two steamers, on the improvement of the harbour, on the construction of the railway and furnaces, and on the working expenses. It was therefore high time that sufficient evidence should be produced for laying the blame of this lamentable failure on the government, and so, as appears to have been Bassano's original scheme, to make a considerable profit by Reclamation.

Traub could not escape from Bassano's request that he would acknowledge the letters sent to the French Consul General as his own; he tried however to weaken their effect by appealing to the letter he had written from Kenne announcing the concessions. Then the Marquis, in the presence of the

tion, if they were inclined to buy Egyptian sulphur. The rather damping answer was that the price was three times that of Sicilian.

official who had given him the letter, denied having received it: but he was soon forced to acknowledge the receipt.

After such occurrences it is difficult to understand how Traub could yield to the persuasions of Bassano who wished to keep him in his power and hoped to win him over to his plans. Not only did Traub remain in the service of the Company but he even took up his residence in the Marquis's house at Ramle and remained for months busy with the preparation of the three necessary copies of the voluminous declaration. Only on a full perception of the distortions and false statements contained in this document was his conscience so aroused that he left Ramle for Alexandria, where, on Sep. 25th 1869 he wrote a long letter announcing and explaining his retirement from his post, and asking for payment of the money due to him within five days. As he received no answer within this time (the answer attempting to win him back by promises, only arrived on Nov. 19th) Traub decided to deliver into the hands of the Egyptian government the correspondence of the Marquis and of the engineer Sevin, together with copies of his own letters. To unburden his conscience, to save his honour and to destroy the treacherous schemes of the company as proved by his letters, - such says Traub, were his motives: to gain 250,000 francs⁽¹⁾ as informer, - so declare his enemies.

(1) Popular report said £2000; this is perhaps only the sum which Santerre hoped to win by the transaction, but on the

Where is the truth? Quien save?

It is probably true that Traub confided his wish to an Alexandrian journalist, the Frenchman Santerre des Roves, and that the latter undertook to manage matters, hoping thereby to make a lucrative business. Traub then himself delivered the said papers to the assembled Ministry, and received, according to his own account, a reward from the Khedive - which we cannot begrudge him when we consider that through the artifices of others he was to lose his reputation and his post, if his account of the affair is in accordance with the facts.

It is of importance, with a view to events yet to be recorded, to note that Bassano had probably already asked Traub to give him the letters in question, but that, when Traub distinctly refused to give them up, he did not consider himself justified in reclaiming them as the property of the Company. On Dec. 11th 1869, Traub started for Europe in order to restore his health much injured by many years residence in "Upper Egypt." He was soon followed by Bassano and Santerre, - the former in order to gain him over to the company again and to start the lawsuit in Paris, and the latter in order to extract from him some further papers which he supposed him to possess, and to make a further profit by selling them. These other hand the first named sum is certainly beyond the mark.

papers, then in the possession of the Egyptian government found their way eventually to Paris, where in the hands of the barrister Saint Aignan they were used with such force against the Sulphur Company that its cause appeared at once damaged.

It might have been expected now that the company would have been obliged to drop further proceedings in the face of such powerful witnesses; but a real Egyptian "Reclamant" does not give up the game so easily, and at this point the administration of the company entirely altered his tactics and chose a new and startling mode of attack.

In July 1870 the Marquis sent to the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine a message to the effect that the papers referring to the Sulphur Company in the possession of Saint Aignan were to be seized as they had been stolen from him; he had, he said, left the papers sent him by Traub as well as copies of Sevin's letters to Traub, locked up in the Company's office in Oppenheim's bank before leaving Alexandria on Dec. 29th 1869, and on his return in April 1870 had not been able to find them. And the Parisian authorities did really seize the papers found in St Aignan's possession, and the proceedings were delayed and postponed in order to enquire into this question of theft. By this episode not only would Traub's honour and truthfulness be damaged in the

eyes of the people, but Sherif Pasha would be suspected of concealment and would be forced to pay up.

At first the tumult of war put a stop to the prosecution of the alleged thief; but after peace was restored and after Traub - no doubt much against the Marquis's wish - had in July 1871 returned to Alexandria, the affair was taken up again. Now however the French consulate which formed the tribunal could not bring the alleged offender into court because Traub as a German could only, according to Egyptian law be heard and judged by the German consul: they were therefore obliged to content themselves with Santerre as to all appearance accessory . and he was accordingly arrested and all his papers seized.

It certainly appeared as though this too had merely been a bold stroke towards some other end, and as though a trial were not intended. Santerre had, on the day of his arrest sent to Sherif Pasha to negotiate about the price of his support, but had been rejected; now, after his arrest, the rumour spread that amongst his sequestrated papers were letters whose publication would seriously tell against the Egyptian government. It was of course supposed that the government even if it did not pay the 19 million francs, would still be willing to purchase silence by a considerable sum.

These papers were supposed to refer to two alleged plots against the Khedive, dating from 1868 and 1869. The first case was that of a perfectly harmless bomb being thrown into his carriage as he drove to the Illuminations arranged in his honour at Alexandria; the second was the discovery of secret springs under the Royal Box at the Cairo theatre. The writer of these lines happened to be present in each town at the time of the "plots" and maintains that nobody except the government attached the slightest importance to the affair, although the consuls felt themselves obliged to pay visits of condolence and congratulation. The papers in Santerre's possession were supposed to prove - and they may have been right - that these two attempts were instigated by the Government itself in order to convince the Sul'an that the Khedive's relations Mustapha and 'Azyl Pacha who had been banished from Egypt and had settled in Constantinople, were threatening his life, and that they must be banished from the precincts of the court.

Whether it be that the government felt themselves innocent, or whether they really did not fear the threatened disclosures, it is a fact that they did not act as the Company had wished and hoped. So the comedy, once started, had to be played out, and in sheer folly and impossibility outdid the wildest farce of the most imaginative comedian.

First of all M. Santerre des Boves (who, a short time before, when he was hoping for a yearly payment from the government for his newspaper, had announced that if the Marquis had him arrested, he would claim 50,000 frs. damages) had thrown himself into the arms of the Company, as both the Government and Traub had forsaken him; he hoped thus to revenge himself on both, and possibly make some profit too. With this noble object in view he declared himself ready to play the part of a confederate deceived by Traub, and silently to let himself be judged as such, without confessing the real facts.

The contents of the declaration were simply absurd. For why should Traub have had his own letters and the copies of Bassano's and Sevin's to him, stolen from the safe keeping of Oppenheim's bank, when he himself possessed copies of the first and the originals of the others, and had given them in to the hands of the Egyptian government? Further, how was it possible that the papers sequestered in Paris, which had been given up by Traub to the government as early as October 1869 could be identical with those alleged to have been stolen in the course of the following winter, certainly not before December 29th 1869? And finally, how could Traub be responsible for the disappearance of papers stolen between December 29th 1869 and April 1870, when he was from December

11th 1869 to July 1871 in Europe?

The proceedings and results of the trial were just as ridiculous. The French judge, d'Espinanous wished the supposed thief Traub to be brought forward as a witness; Traub however refused to come forward and was supported in his course by the German Consul von Jasmund. The latter then offered himself to hear Traub's evidence and to communicate the result, and laid stress on the absolute necessity of this measure. Traub requested that he should, at the public session of the French Consul General, before the assembled French colony, not only answer some narrowly limited questions, but openly declare the facts. Both were refused, and then began the trial of Santerre, who, in accordance with his rôle submitted silently. The proceedings developed into a most undignified national orgie, in the course of which M. Lachaud from Paris, formerly private adviser to Napoleon III, amidst the applause of the French public indulged in a three days' attack on the German nation, without once being called to order by the presiding judge, insulted Traub as a "Prussian" (1)

(1) This affair furnished a much needed lesson to Herr Traub. For I remember very well one day in Jan. 1868 at Kenne in the presence of the German consul and myself, Traub announcing that although he was of German origin, his sympathies were with the French. When the war broke out he hurried from Milan to Paris, and there devoted himself to the care of the wounded in the French army, until he himself, ill of smallpox had to be taken to the hospital at Orleans. This was the gratitude shown him by the country of his adoption and he was no doubt glad to be able to put himself under the protection of those whom he had hitherto regarded too little.

and even went so far as to accuse the German consul of protecting thieves. (1) After thus relieving their feelings they began to consider the sentence, and condemned Santerre to one month's imprisonment and a very small fine. (parti-
riunt montes.).....How seriously the affair was looked upon socially by those most nearly concerned may be seen from the fact that after his sentence, Santerre was received by French families as before, and was invited to dinner by the Marquis. Nevertheless the sentence was confirmed at Aix and perhaps elsewhere, but I have never been able to discover anything further, either of this or of the main trial, which has probably been quickly dropped. I did hear however that Traub had been appointed master(!) in the Girls' School founded by the Government at Cairo, and a friend well up in the secrets of Cairo wrote to me in Jan. 1873 the following characteristic words: "The Khedive has so far refused to pay any compensation to the Sulphur.....and appears to look forward calmly to the trial about to come on in Paris. He has however in the meantime received in the most cordial manner a member of that - the Frenchman Bravay, formerly very closely connected with the fortunes of the country."

So it appears not only possible but highly probable that

(1) I am assured that no account of these strange proceedings appeared in any paper except the insignificant little "Manifesto Giornaliero" so that people do seem to have been a little ashamed of such a discreditable performance.

the Sulphur Society in spite of all its crimes against the Khedive has received a peaceoffering from him, especially as one of the members was Oppenheim, who was often necessary to the Khedive in his financial embarrassments.

This one example of undignified speculation, to which a long string of similar Reclamations could be added by the initiated, must suffice to reveal in their true light the business principles of a part of the foreigners living in Egypt. It should be acknowledged however that a not inconsiderable share of the blame attached to the Khedive really belongs to those who live by sharp practice, although in most cases he has to pay; and that these people had no right to join in the general cry of indignation which was raised over the Khedive. Yet they it was who cried the loudest.

The foregoing account was, as I have already stated, written for the most part in 1872, and its substance was delivered as a lecture before the Dresden Geological Society on October 18th of the same year, as is related in the Society's proceedings. Since the summer of 1881 it has been lying ready for the press, but waiting for the issue of further events. It is clear therefore that it has no relation whatever with events which have since then taken place in Egypt. As the contents however touch on matters which are

no doubt connected with the development and complication of Egyptian affairs, I feel obliged to add a few remarks in order to prevent misapprehension.

Everyone who has had the opportunity of learning to know the land and people of Egypt, and who is willing to follow impartially the course of events in the land of the Pharaohs, must see at once that the speculating part of the Europeans in Egypt has not been guiltless of the fate which has unfortunately overtaken themselves and so many innocent persons. They fully deserved what they suffered, they justly lost what they had unjustly won, and they have therefore no moral right to "reclaim" what a retaliating Fate has taken from them. From this point of view it is only to be regretted that, at the settlement of the great compensation question, it will be impossible to separate the sheep from the goats, and that those who are bold and well-practised in reclamation will probably reap an advantage over the innocent who are fully entitled to some return.

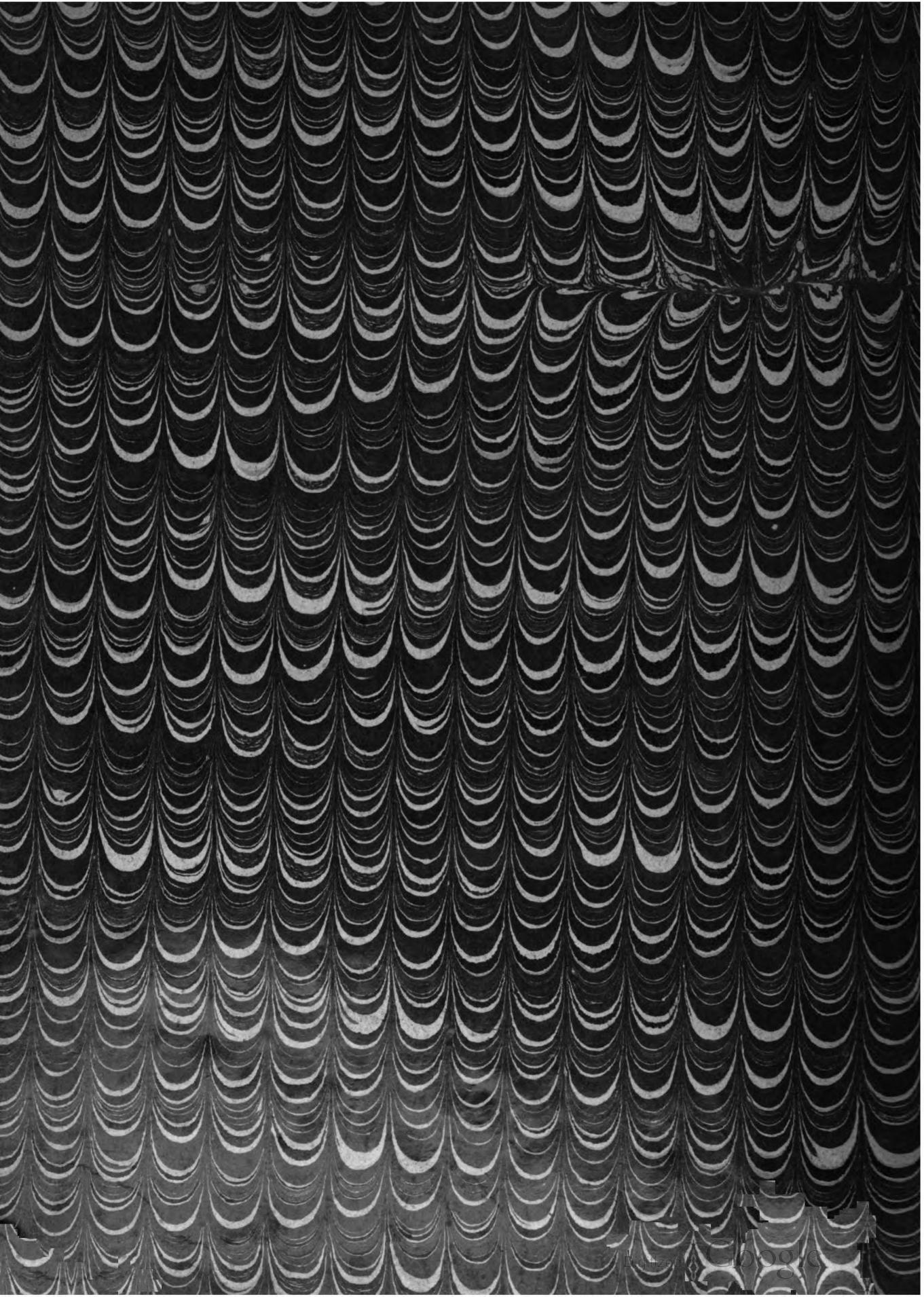
But on the other hand, it is very foolish and wrong to deduce from this that the natives have a right, on account of the many and grievous sins committed by Europeans in and against Egypt, to rob foreigners of their possessions, to banish them from the country, and eventually to murder them! For in the first place, it is well known that the Egyptian

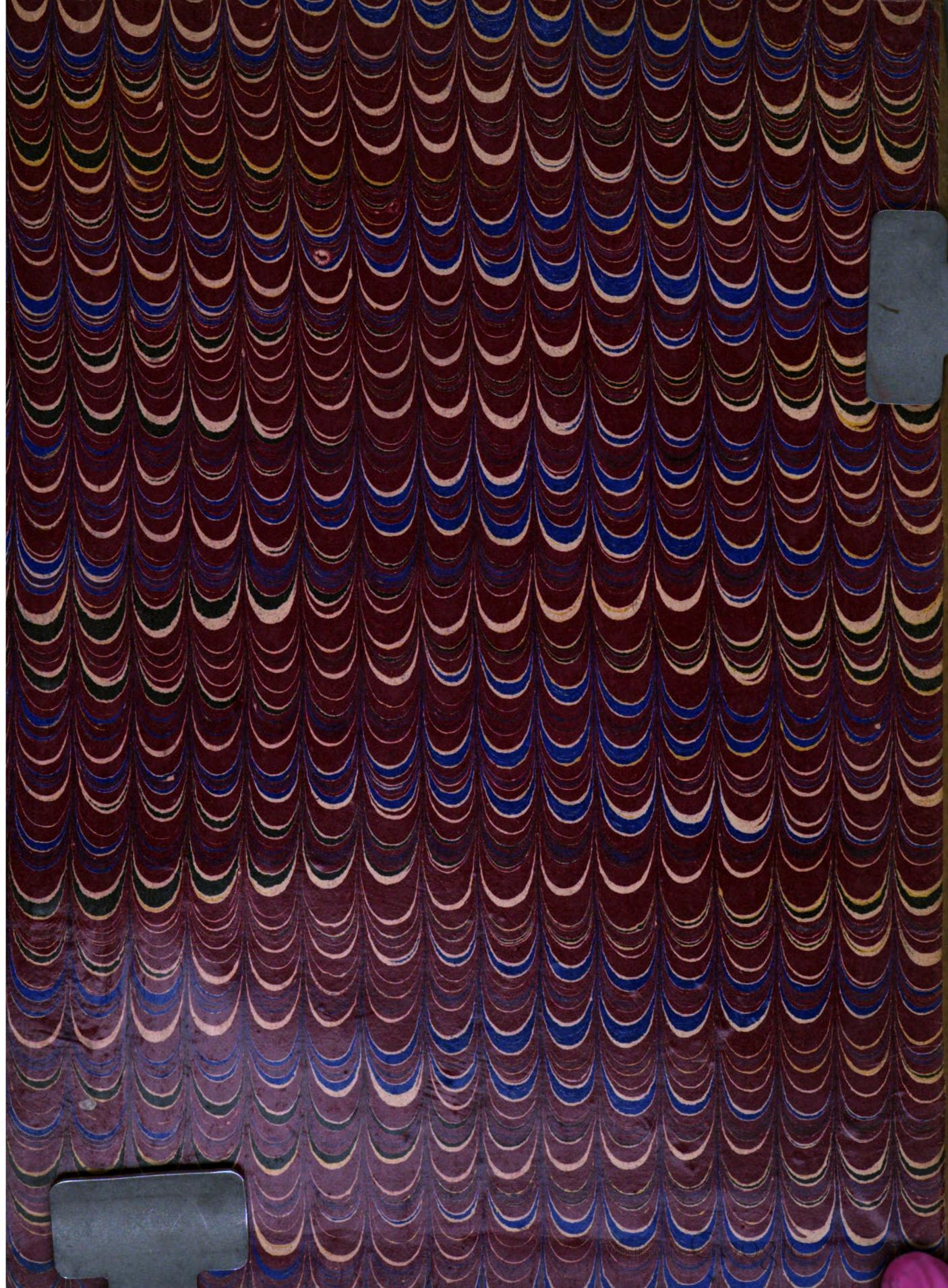
Turkish, Levantine and Greek subjects of the Khedive who have risen to power have certainly not pillaged the land less than certain members of the European colonies, and in the second place, European civilisation has, within a few decades raised Egypt from comparative barbarism into a state which in every respect except perhaps the finance of the last few years, has surpassed every other state of Asia and Africa, and even some European countries. If the policy of "leaving Egypt to the Egyptians" - the prevailing cry of the ignorant - had been pursued, it would have meant delivering this unlettered and uncultured land over to the wildest Mahomedan fanaticism and to the murderous barbarism of the Mamelukes. Indignation at the plundering of the Europeans was however by no means the pretext of the now suppressed revolt. M.de Lesseps, it is true, declared in an after-dinner speech in England that Arabi was a noble character, and that there was a national party in Egypt which should be encouraged. It appears to us however that M.de Lesseps, perhaps to save his canal and perhaps because he was not conscious of any fault on his own side, spoke then as a diplomatist of the old Talleyrand school, and not according to his own convictions, for we cannot believe that a man so well informed on Egyptian affairs as the renowned father of the Suez canal undoubtedly is, could believe in the noble qualities of that Fellah chief who incited

the mob of Alexandria to arson and murder; and we are all convinced that he himself knows nothing of a great party in Egypt striving for the national welfare. We were never able to see in Arabi anything more than an ambitious semi-barbarian, who endeavoured to raise himself by fair means or foul, and with this "noble" aid tried to force Europeans from the highest military positions, to obtain and maintain which, somewhat higher qualifications are necessary than those possessed by a Fellah or peasant brought up in Egypt. That his plans met with the approval of a host of Fellah-officers, like him burning for preferment which they could not gain in the normal way because they did not deserve it, and that the head of this military revolt hoped to rouse the easily moved populace through social and religious excitement, need not surprise us, especially as the effeminate weakness of the regent and the inconsiderate high-handedness of the Europeans supported him. We regret very much, on principle, and also on account of the safety now to be newly established in the country, that political interests have sheltered the ring-leader and his confederates from their well-deserved penalties. This lamentable decision has damped the joy with which we watched the suppression of the revolt, although we cannot sympathise with the immoral foreign policy of the English. Let us hope that, although the full punishment has

not followed the offence, the heavy blows which have fallen upon this beautiful country may have a purifying and beneficial effect, and serve as a serious lesson to all those who had any share in the blame.

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